

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE UTILITY ADVISORY COMMISSION
GARDNER, KANSAS
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August 6, 2020**

The Utilities Advisory Commission of Gardner, Kansas, met in Regular Session on August 6, 2020, at City Hall. Present were Chairman Gary Williams, Commissioner Barbara Coleman, Commissioner Bryce Augustine, Commissioner Jake Wells, Utilities Department Director Gonzalo Garcia and Administrative Assistant Erin Groh. Vice-Chairman Kristina Harrison was not in attendance.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Chairman Gary Williams.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CONSENT AGENDA

1. **Standing approval of the minutes as written for the June 4, 2020, meeting of the Utility Advisory Commission.**

Motion by Commissioner Coleman, seconded by Commissioner Augustine, to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion carried 4-0 Aye

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. **Discuss possible rebate programs for LED lights, smart thermostats, insulation, heating and cooling.**

Director Garcia presented some information provided to him by the company Ecologix. Garcia mentioned that it is a large amount of information so he wanted to do an overview of what products and services they provide as examples of some ideas that Gardner could implement. He wanted to know what areas the UAC wanted to concentrate on as far as rebates or incentives. The following are some ideas that the city could implement that other cities in the Midwest have implemented as a partnership with Ecologix:

Mid American Residential Rebates: Appliance recycling, heating and cooling, a home check-in line, smart thermostats, summer savers, special rates during peak times.

Mid American Commercial Rebates: Commercial New Construction, heating and cooling, lighting.

Alliant Energy Rebates: Power strips, heat pumps, appliance recycling, water heaters, electric vehicles, energy efficient gas furnaces, geothermal systems, learning thermostats, LED light bulbs and fixtures, variable speed pool pumps, energy assessments, air purifiers.

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Everygy: Heating and cooling solar rebates, interior lighting and incentives based on the type of lighting.

Ecologix Products: Insulation, Solar Attic Fans, Air Sealing, Power Conditioners.

Garcia mentioned that currently Gardner has solar panels on 14 residential homes and one wind turbine which is on a commercial facility. Gardner residents have added solar panels to about 10 homes over the past five years.

Garcia discussed that in order to work with Ecologix, you have to do a partnership with them. In our case, we would have to do some type of bid, like an RFP or RFQ. Garcia stated that a possible drawback with going with Ecologix would be that we will need to be open to all the possible providers and actually solicit similar companies to see who is the best match for the city.

Chairman Williams asked for clarification about whether or not the city would need to have a person responsible for going on site to determine whether a program is feasible or not. Garcia said that we would need a third party to make those determinations. Williams asked if it would be a city person inspecting and Garcia replied that it could be but we would need to find someone who knows about energy audits and assessments. Garcia said he thinks we need to start small in regards to what programs we offer and then see what kind of results we get and then we can expand to a bigger program. For example, we can start with LED's, smart thermostats, or water controllers (for sprinkler systems), then we could see if there's a lot of reception, then we can expand to something unless, instead of starting out big with programs like multi-layer insulation or air sealing.

Chairman Williams asked if there really is an incentive at this point and for the next few years for reducing our peak load on the electric side. Director Garcia responded that we have 54 megawatts of capacity. Our peak last year was 41 megawatts. We have been selling the excess energy from Dogwood to the grid. Williams stated that from a utility's standpoint, just dollars and cents, it doesn't make sense to offer an incentive. From an ecological standpoint, it makes sense to reduce the carbon and then people can reduce their utility bill. Commissioner Coleman stated that if you start out small though, in future years, there will be benefits from it. Commissioner Augustine added that Gardner is growing and that with two apartment complexes going in and development on the other side of I-35, there's going to be additional needs for power. Williams stated that as a utility, there's no pressing need to reduce our peak. We have the capacity to meet our load, but still it would be a good thing for the city to investigate this.

Commissioner Augustine said that he likes the idea of starting small. He said that the Wi-Fi thermostats, the LED's, maybe the surge protectors, some small things like that would be a good place to start, and get some good promotion of it and good publicity around it from the Utility Dept., from the City so that people know that this is there to take advantage of. Augustine said that for a phase II in the future maybe energy audits could be done, as he has seen in his hometown.

Much discussion was held about implementing rebates for utility customers in Gardner, such as ideas for ways to get a reduced utility bill. Chairman Williams stated that it would be good if the city could make an energy efficiency effort and to help people in some form to help them get a handle on paying their bills. Commissioner Wells said that he would support it for that reason as well. There were a lot of hot months this summer and you hear people talk about how their bills have changed and it's something positive that the city could do to help. He thought it maybe doesn't need to be a full rebate and a way for people to take control of their energy usage which would be a positive thing. Both Commissioners Wells and Augustine discussed how it would probably be best to have a program where the consumer/resident could do a self-install easily, like thermostats, power strips, etc. Commissioner Wells said that If load does grow fast enough in the future, having some experience with a rebate program might help to roll out a larger attic insulation or air source heat pumps so we can transition into something when the need does arise. We're in a great position now in terms of energy capacity vs. usage to test the waters, and see what we can do

for the future. Chairman Williams thought that maybe there could be rules implemented for new construction for energy efficiency if it would be beneficial.

Chairman Williams asked if Director Garcia needs clear direction from the Utility Commission for the rebate programs to move forward. Garcia replied that he would need clear direction on what the UAC would like to explore. Commissioner Augustine said he would like to see a rebate program for thermostats, LED bulbs and power strips. Williams said that the price on LED bulbs is coming down drastically. Garcia stated that the LED bulbs can last up to 7-20 years depending on what you pay. Commissioner Coleman asked if the main programs we should consider are LED lights, thermostats and power surge protectors. Coleman said that she thought those three ideas would be good. Chairman Williams thought we should also look into water controllers for home irrigation systems which can be controlled by an app on your phone. It checks current moisture levels and future precipitation so that it doesn't water the lawn when it rains and conserves water. He said that his device paid for itself in the first year through water savings.

2. Second quarter outage reports for Electric, Line Maintenance Wastewater and Line Maintenance Water.

2020 Second Quarter Electric Outage Report

Director Garcia presented the Electric Outage report for the 2nd Quarter of 2020. Electric staff responded to 16 outages affecting 235 customers: 1 caused by equipment failures, 1 caused by a tree, 4 caused by animals, 1 caused by a storm, 2 caused by damage by others, and 7 caused by other reasons. The average workday response time was 8 minutes and the average workday length of outage was 17 minutes. The average after-hours response time was 31 minutes and the average after-hours length of outage was 55 minutes. The overall average response time was 22 minutes and the overall average length of outage was 41 minutes.

2020 Second Quarter Wastewater Outage Report

Director Garcia presented the Wastewater Collection report for the 2nd Quarter of 2020. Line maintenance staff completed 5 sanitary sewer line repairs affecting 5 customers, with 1 being caused by roots and 4 due to residents' issues. The average workday response time was 13 minutes and the average workday repair time was 1 hour and 40 minutes. The average after-hours response time was 26 minutes and the average after-hours repair time was 1 hour and 21 minutes. The overall average response time was 18 minutes and the overall average repair time was 1 hour and 32 minutes.

2020 Second Quarter Water Outage Report

Director Garcia presented the Water Distribution Repairs Report for the 2nd Quarter of 2020. Line maintenance staff completed 27 water distribution service repairs affecting 33 customers: 4 due to line failures, 1 due to valve failure, 3 due to damage by others, and 19 due to residents' issues. The average workday response time was 6 hours and 52 minutes and the average workday repair time was 47 hours and 38 minutes. The average after-hours response time was 28 minutes and the average after-hours repair time was 52 minutes. The overall average response time was 5 hours and 27 minutes and the overall average repair time was 37 hours and 15 minutes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Augustine asked where the city was at with the Smart Meter project. Director Garcia stated that on August 6, Nexgrid started implementing the "Backbone" and there will be five gateways that will be the main receivers for the smart meter, which will allow the smart meter to exchange information from the

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meter to the Nexgrid system. On August 17th they will be replacing 100 electric meters and it will be like a pilot. At that point we'll see if the meters are communicating with the gateways and see if the gateways are communicating with the Nexgrid server. Once it passes the test we'll start with all the electric meters and then water meters will be installed. Chairman Williams asked how long the testing phase will be. Garcia said that he thinks it will be a couple of weeks possibly. Once the system is working there will be a mass install. Nexgrid says that they will be able to install 150- 200 meters a day.

In the previous meeting, in June, Commissioner Augustine asked about residents renting a hydrant meter and providing their own hose to hook up to it. Director Garcia stated that you have to pay \$85 to get a hydrant meter and usually a six inch hose has to be provided by the resident. Garcia said he spoke to Line Maintenance and they said that they don't recommend using a six inch hose because it causes a lot of flow and pressure and they suggest using an adapter. The adapter will be a six inch hose that hooks up to a garden hose. The adapter will be available to customers next time someone requests a hydrant meter from Utility Billing to fill pools, etc. Customers can use their own garden hose and hook it up to the adapter. Augustine thanked Garcia for the follow-up.

Commissioner Coleman asked where Director Garcia was at with the oil and grease program (FOG- Fats, Oils and Grease program). Director Garcia said that based on the UAC's questions on how we're going to implement the FOG program and how much it will cost, the Utilities Dept. presented some information to City Council in late July about several fees that the department felt should be charged to businesses and facilities (that impact the water supply with fats, oils and grease), such as a review fee, operating fee and inspection fee. The presentation was to determine if the fees were necessary but after discussion was held, it was decided that the ordinance would be rewritten so that the city can get the FOG program going and have the first year be a time of learning so that we can gather information and in a year from now decide what fees should be charged. It was written in the ordinance that if fees are agreed upon by Council, a resolution could be written for the ordinance to include fees.

Director Garcia gave an update about the Hillsdale Water Treatment Plant Expansion. Most of the actual structures at Hillsdale are almost complete. No equipment or pipes have been installed yet. On the raw water line, we're almost half way done, already about a mile underground. We have the new lagoon with two cells and the plant will start to fill it up over the next couple of weeks to do a leak test, then the test will last about 1-2 weeks. If we pass the test, then at that point we will ask KDHE to grant a permit so we can use the new lagoons. Chairman Williams asked if the inspection department of Miami Co. is working closely with Gardner. Director Garcia said that Miami Co. issued the building permits and we haven't had any snags and it is working well.

Commissioner Augustine asked Director Garcia about how at the recent City Council meeting he talked about not using treated water for a leak test at the Hillsdale Water Treatment Plant. Augustine asked if he got approval for that (another method). Garcia responded that Utilities got approval to instead use the backwash from the actual process to fill the new lagoon. Right now CAS is working to put a pump in so we can transfer the backwash to the new lagoon to fill it up.

Chairman Williams and commissioners welcomed new commissioner Jake Wells.

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ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Augustine, seconded by Commissioner Coleman, to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

Motion carried 4-0 Aye

/s/ Erin Groh

Utilities Department Administrative Assistant